THE AERONAUT.

No 165 — July 8 — 1818

> Hail, Memory, hail! in thy exhaustless mine
> From age to age, unnumbered treasures shine!
> ROGERS.

The chronicle of memory, says Watts,+ is like the writings of the ancient fathers as described by Milton—containing "whatsoever "old time with his huge drag net has conveyed down to us along the stream of ages whether it be shells or shell fish, jewels or pebbles, sticks or straws, sea weeds or mud."—

Gloomy indeed would be the state of the mind, had volition no power over our reminiscences, and were they not for the most

---

+ Of the mind. c XVII.

past in a quiescent state. Paſsive memory in its strict acceptation, conjures up but few of our former impreſsions. It is doubtleſs, difficult to distinguish between active and paſsive memory+, as it is between paſsive memory and consciousneſs. Des Cartes' argument to prove his existence, was as idle as it was weak; because that was self evident to himself and every one else, which he sought a syllogism to prove. But there have been individuals, neither moonstricken nor ideots, who have waked from reverie in which they had departed from consciousneſs and from memory both active and paſsive, who have, for a moment stood in need of the philosophers argument, to ascertain their being and their identity. Sepulchred in the grave of abstraction, they have been in the plight of the dead man, restored to life by miraculous agency, and enquired, "Whence and what am I?" Their syllogism was not "*Cogito, ergo sum*"; but "*Reminiscor quod fui, ergo sum egometipse.*"

We are not however about to enter into

+ Beattie's Moral Science - I. 124.

any metaphysical disquisition, but merely to throw together a few trite ideas on the subject of the pains and pleasures of memory. And at the very basis of the question respecting the preponderance of evil ~~[illegible]~~ or good, occasioned by the faculty of retention, lies the distinction of which we have spoken, between voluntary and involuntary recollection. a question which, after all, every one must decide if he can, for himself; and which no one can determine for his fellows - which seems to offer no clinching point, unless in the distinction we spoke of, but of which all men prate incontinently, upon that very account.

After pursuing the course staked by the metaphysical division of the retentive faculty, the most notable points of the subject seem to present themselves regularly, and with no very doubtful aspect, in their simple modes, though as subjects of comparison they are still difficult to handle. The former it is easy to follow up, without instituting the latter.

Active memory being the mere exercise of the power of willing, operating on the retentive faculties, it should seem to be in our election to call up either pleasant or painful recollections. It is true that when the will has started the train of thinking, it is impossible for it to banish the concomitant remembrances which association will always bring. But the contemplation of agreeable and disagreeable things at the same time, is like the meeting of fire with water; extinction and absorption ensue, and smoke alone remains. The will is certainly far from being omnipotent in this sphere of its agency; but, unless the associated ideas are fraught with more mental misery than the proposed theme for contemplation, it is in our power to command the consideration of the latter by which effort we at the same time preclude the unpleasant reappearance of the former.+

This is the simplest light in which the pleasures of memory can be viewed, as abstracted from the state of the mind at the time of exerting its power of recalling scenes that have past. The will by its virtual energy simply, does little or no

+ Lock. I. II. c 21 § 27-30

control over organical impressions, neither can it recall them with much intensity or precision after they have past: with mere sensual rapture or physical agony memory has little to do - as divested of all their associations. Its real pleasures are, like the music of the ancients
"warm, energic, chaste, sublime".

To the happy individual then, and God grant there may be many such, who has past through the stages of his life without the agonies of too late repentance, or the horrors of black remorse, who has stained his soul with the guilt of no deep crime and his honour with no blot for which charity has no hesitation, who has seen things with an unclouded eye and with a temperate and cheerful heart; who has been blest in the developement of social charities and the reciprocation of domestic affections, over whose head the clouds may have past and on whom the storm may have broke but for whom the Iris has still beamed with the radiance of returning peace, a memento, but a bow of promise — to such an individual the mirror of memory offers

a magic source of beatitude- not vivid as anticipation, nor clouded like the present- but sober, pure and holy like the ~~mellow~~ lustre of the horizon, when the fervent day beam is seen no longer, but its memorial yet lingers upon the verge of our vision- the hour when nature and nature's children are preparing for their repose- the hour perhaps tinged with melancholy, yet fraught with the inspiration of that songstress whose notes
"Sooth'd sweetly sad Electra's poet's ear."
For such an individual, memory has charms indeed. He may exclaim, in the words of an anonymous rhymer-

" All hail on thy eternal throne
Bright chronicler of moments gone!
Thou ~~[illegible]~~ wizard painter, on whose glance
The deep arcades of time advance,
The while with colors fresh as morn
With life thy glowing pictures burn,
When thy rapt pencil swift arrays
The vistas long of perish'd days-
Lyre of the soul! whose constant strings
Can pour upon the music's wings
Whatever lay the minstrel loves,
Where'er the eye enquiring roves

Memory.

Knit with our consciousness, thy art
Brings all we love around the heart,
Binds souls, though oceans intervene
And peoples the deserted scene.

As we are yet young in years and experience, we cannot speak from individual knowledge with much confidence or precision on this topic. The Common lot of all common men is pretty generally the same: but the tone of their feeling, the acuteness or obtuseness of their sensibility, the complexion of their spiritual parts, are as various as the sizes, shapes, hues and powers of their bodies. With the general mass however, the poet used a poetical licence when he said that memory was "still importunate and vain." And it is still harder to conceive how it can "turn all the past to pain." There is certainly more point than truth or justice in the remark, as applied to the recollection of scenes of pleasure. The present may grow dark in the comparison, and memory thus prove "a fond deceiver." But who would part with the proud consolation which Byron puts in the mouth of his hero—

The Aeronaut.

"Come what will, I have been blest!"

Let it be remembered that we have already stated, that we say nothing of the agonies of repentance, or of the horrors of remorse. Although we wish to investigate the shadows as well as the light of the picture, the blackness which a divine ray alone can dissipate comes not under our consideration. Yet though repentance in itself, brandishing its scorpion lash and vibrating its snaky cincture, is more horrible than all the monster visions of the imagination, its remembrance is often connected with pleasant and consolatory feelings. When good resolutions have been the consequence of its bitter purgation, when they have been succeeded by virtuous practice, and peace of mind has built her downy nest – is he not happy who has thus wrought out his disenthralment from habit and his redemption from misery, in contemplating the triumphant struggles by which he has disencumbered himself from his shackles? The remembrance of that hour is a Jubilee for the soul, like the glad anniversaries which repeat the choral pæans of nations for the recovery of their liberties, although the recollection is also present of the darkness and doubt of the struggle by which their freedom was won; of the once precarious issue of the conflict; of the blood of the martyred patriots, by which that conflict is consecrated -

Alas! how few who have often needed resolutions to combat temptation can enjoy unadulterated bliss in looking back to the hour when they were formed! How often do their gloomy ghosts attend us, from the gambolling steps of childhood to the failing decrepitude of age; while no mortal sorcerer has power to lay them beneath the fathomless waters of oblivion!

We have heard the Joy of Grief beautifully spiritualized by an American divine who applied the subject to the Christian's reflections on his former repentance, after he has been confirmed in his faith. this preacher fell however into the strain for which the evangelical ministry have been reprobated by some, of painting spiritual feelings and divine aspirations, by epithets appropriated to mortal paſsions and desires.

We all easily justify our own conduct, even when expreſsly contrary to the written rule of practice, in our own eyes. Few are disposed to trouble themselves with the causes as well as the effects of their misfortunes. And when no moral turpitude presents itself to the mind, to darken the prospect, can present adversity or deprivation take all their beauty from the pictures of memory? all their richneſs from the colors?

Time's sombrous touches soon correct the piece
Mellow each tint and bid each discord cease;
A softer tone of light pervades the whole
And steals a pensive languor o'er the soul?

Would the war worn soldier, consigned by ingratitude, to penury & oblivion, relinquish the proud recollections, which ofpose to unmerited slights the consciousness of his deserts? Would the patriot politician, stripped of dignity, pursued to his dignity by the abuse of those, whom his uprightness had offended, and forgotten then by those whom his meridian influence had warmed into existence, renounce the high consolation which the remembrance of integrity that never had swerved must yield him? Does the memory of the past darken the present, or invalidate the solitudes to which injustice has consigned him? Does the memory of the past sink down or bear up the spirit?

We cannot now analyze Melancholy, and therefore briefly pass over that solitary and sacred feeling which Poets have called the "Joy of Grief." When the shaft of the insatiate archer, with its double aim has destroyed some social tie or cut in sunder the unity of domestic bliss, while one long loved lies low, and the stricken deer whose heart alone was pierced, while left to endure the mockery of being, wandering around the grave of the departed - when the horrors of unwonted loneliness, and the numbing influence first felt from the wound have subsided - ere yet that wound is completely cicatrized, and new associations have distracted the intensity of thought, new pursuits left the sod unvisited, where all he once loved lies sepulchred - this intermediate state has been described as the 'solemn feast of feeling', the sabbath of the mind'.

'Soft as evening o'er the ocean
When she charms the waves to rest.

Pensive Memory then retraces
Scenes of bliss forever fled,
Lives in former times and places
Holds communion with the dead.

This description would however class the Joy of Grief under the head of Passive Memory.

Of memory as the storehouse of knowledge, as it may be spoken of with most certainty, so it has least need of being mentioned - since no question can possibly be agitated on the subject. Among the punishments of Tartarus, that of the daughters of Danaus was most finely imagined. And who can conceive a more miserable being than one, who should have mind enough to know what the advantages of the faculty of retention are, without enjoying its advantages - who should toil to fill a sieve with water? Crude are their conceptions, who suppose that we think of the scenes of our childhood with most pleasure, because we remember least of them. It is because "distance lends enchantment to the view" of "golden visions and romantic dreams, all connected with innocence and peace.

Of Passive memory, for the reasons first assigned, we shall say little. The vast range of association opening here upon our view, deters us from the attempt. And though far more free from metaphysical subtleties, though understood by every heart and dear to every virtuous bosom, though it unites by its mysterious links all sensitive nature and embraces in its range all the animate and inanimate objects of perception, it offers in the abstract but a simple picture of Love. Such are the charities which bind us to our being. What must be the nature of that ineffable Essence which is all Love, embracing all its capacities, realizing all its pleasures!

The feelings of the Exile, however stand conspicuous among the examples of Association. He carries his Country in his bosom, into whatever clime his footsteps wander. The soldier of Switzerland, in foreign armies, wreathed with glory, and reposing in well earned and unbounded confidence, sickened as he heard the airs dear to the echoes of Jura or St Gothard. The voice of the Spirit of his native mountains was heard in the simple melody of his home. ~~He wept~~ He turned to the far bowed horizon; the Alps seemed reared by necromantic art in the dim uncertainty of its shadow. He wept - he sprung to grasp the vision - he felt the utter loneliness of exile - he deserted his standards, or pined and died beneath his trophies,

Et moriens reminiscitur Argos.

S.